

Managing Your Diabetes: Reducing Risks

Jasmine Gonzalvo, Pharmacist, Diabetes Educator, Purdue University

Working with a diabetes educator to help support you eating healthy, staying active, monitoring your blood sugar, taking medication and finding healthy ways to cope and problem solve can help you reduce the risks of diabetes complications.

Narrator

Bethany Maranowicz has lived with diabetes for years, so many aspects of managing the disease, such as checking her blood sugar, are just a part of everyday life.

Bethany Maranowicz, Diabetes Patient

Checking your blood sugar regularly and writing it down and communicating to your doctor about that really helps with kind of developing a sense of what my lifestyle does to my blood sugar and how I need to change things, if need be.

Narrator

Bethany is so in tune with her body that she knows exercise, even the type of exercise she does, can make a difference.

Bethany Maranowicz, Diabetes Patient

Running will drop my blood sugar quite a bit more than maybe walking or doing yoga. So it's good for me to develop patterns in when I exercise and making sure I check myself before and afterwards, and then noticing how different exercises can affect my blood sugar differently.

Narrator

Reducing risks also means regular medical tests and checkups for Bethany including the eye doctor and the dentist.

Bethany Maranowicz, Diabetes Patient

And then making sure just at home that I'm doing self-care for my feet, important for a diabetic to check your feet regularly, to make sure you have good sensation and you're not missing any kind of sores or cuts, or anything like that.

Narrator

There are several things you can do to help reduce your risks and avoid other health problems:

- Don't smoke: People with diabetes who smoke are three times more likely to die of heart disease or stroke than those who don't. Smoking raises your blood sugar and weakens your body's ability to respond to insulin. Besides harming your lungs and heart, it can make vision problems develop faster, too.
- See your doctor regularly: Your doctor will want to see you about every three months, to check your weight, blood pressure, feet and eyes. You might have tests to check your kidneys, cholesterol and average blood sugar levels. Keep a record of each test and know what your targets are. Be sure to get a flu shot every year, too.
- Visit the eye doctor at least once a year: and make sure the exam includes dilating your pupils.
- See your dentist every 6 months: because diabetes puts you at higher risk of cavities and gum disease. And don't forget to brush and floss regularly.
- Keep your feet dry and clean: Wear comfortable shoes and check your feet every day. Diabetes damages your nerves so you might not be able to feel it if you have a sore. If you find anything, let your healthcare provider know right away.

Cecilia Sauter, Diabetes Educator, University of Michigan

Be aware that more than half of the people with diabetes can suffer from sleep apnea. If you snore loudly or feel sluggish during the day, ask your diabetes educator to screen you for sleep apnea.

Narrator

The bottom line is you have to know your body, and your diabetes, in order to keep yourself healthy.

Bethany Maranowicz, Diabetes Patient

If there was a cure someday, it would be strange for me to be able to let go of all these little responsibilities that I have.

Narrator

Reducing Risks. One of 7 steps to a healthier you.